

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-06

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-14 SAB-01 L-01 SP-02 H-01 INR-05

/031 W

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R 030041Z JUL 75

FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8677

INFO AMEMBASSY PANAMA

C O N F I D E N T I A L MEXICO 5898

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PN, PQ, MX

SUBJ: US-PANAMA TREATY NEGOTIATIONS: ECHEVERRIA BRIEFING

FOR ROGERS FROM AMBASSADOR JOVA

REF: STATE 156112

1. AFTER LENGTHY CORDIAL CONVERSATION COVERED SEPARATELY, ECHEVERRIA RAISED FORTHCOMING MEETING WITH TORRIJOS. SENATOR MANSFIELD SPOKE FIRST MAKING FOLLOWING POINTS: HE COULD ASSURE ECHEVERRIA THAT USG WAS CONTINUING THESE COMPLICATED NEGOTIATIONS WITH PANAMA IN GOOD FAITH. IN FACT, HE KNEW PERSONALLY THAT BOTH PRESIDENT FORD AND SECRETARY KISSINGER WERE EAGER TO HAVE AT LEAST CONCEPTUAL TREATY AGREEMENTS COMPLETED DURING CLOSE OF THE PRESENT YEAR. HE OBSERVED THAT 1976, BEING AN ELECTION YEAR, WOULD NOT BE THE MOST PROPITIOUS TIME FOR CARRYING OUT NEGOTIATIONS WITH SENSITIVE DOMESTIC ASPECTS. SENATOR SAID THAT SNYDER AMENDMENT HAD COME AS SURPRISE TO BOTH SENATE, THE HOUSE LEADERS AND TO STATE DEPARTMENT. HE HIMSELF WAS ON SENATE APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE AND HENCE WAS CERTAIN THAT THIS COMMITTEE WOULD ENDORSE THE FULL BUDGET FOR PANAMA NEGOTIATIONS TEAM. WHILE HE COULD NOT ANSWER WITH SUCH CERTAINTY FOR THE  
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ENTIRETY OF THE SENATE, HE WAS FAIRLY CERTAIN THAT HIS

SUBCOMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS WOULD BE SUPPORTED ON SENATE FLOOR. IF SO, MEASURE WOULD HAVE TO GO TO CONFERENCE IN ORDER TO BRIDGE GAP BETWEEN HOUSE AND SENATE. SHOULD CONFERENCE NOT BE ABLE TO SUPPORT FULL BUDGET, IN HIS OPINION, IT WOULD COME THROUGHT WITH AT LEAST HALF THE AMOUNT REQUIRED AND HE UNDERSTOOD THAT THE EXECUTIVE WAS PREPARED TO COMPLETE THE FUNDING FROM OTHER SOURCES, PERHAPS EVEN THE WHITE HOUSE CONFIDENTIAL FUNDS.

2. QUITE SEPARATE FROM MATTER OF FUNDING NEGOTIATIONS TEAM, WAS EVENTUAL PROBLEM OF OBTAINING REQUIRED TWO-THIRDS VOTE IN THE SENATE TO RATIFY CHANGES IN ANY PROPOSED NEW TREATY. THIS WOULD ALSO BE PROBLEM IN VIEW OF FACT THAT 37 SENATORS HAD ALREADY SPOKEN AGAINST ANY CHANGE IN STATUS OF CANAL ZONE. IT WOULD BE NECESSARY FOR MANSFIELD AND OTHER SENATORS WHO THOUGHT LIKE HIM, AS WELL AS FOR STATE DEPARTMENT ITSELF, TO WORK MORE VIGOROUSLY WITH CONGRESS ON THIS MATTER. SIMILARLY, HE HOPED THAT WHEN ECHEVERRIA TALKED WITH TORRIJOS HE WOULD POINT OUT TO HIM U.S. DOMESTIC POLITICAL PROBLEM AND URGE THAT HE IN TURN NOT INFLAME PASSIONS MORE THAN POLITICALLY NECESSARY IN ORDER NOT TO FURTHER ALIENATE THE U.S. SENATE CONSERVATIVES. HE STRESSED THAT NOTHING COULD BE DONE WITHOUT THE TWO-THIRDS VOTE OF THE SENATE. HE ALSO STRESSED HIS OWN PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE OF USG DESIRE TO CONTINUE NEGOTIATIONS TO A CONSTRUCTIVE TERMINATION AND THE PERSONAL SUPPORT OF PRESIDENT FORD AND SECRETARY KISSINGER FOR THE REMARKABLE EFFORTS OF AMBASSADOR BUNKER WHO IN HIS OPINION WAS THE PERFECT MAN FOR THE JOB.

3. ECHEVERRIA EXPRESSED UNDERSTANDING OF U.S. POSITION AND AT HIS REQUEST GAVE HIM FURTHER DETAILS DRAWING IN DEPTH OF DEPTTEL 156112. I STRESSED TO ECHEVERRIA OUR FEELING THAT NEGOTIATIONS WHILE GOING SLOWLY AND CAREFULLY WERE GOING SATISFACTORILY. I ILLUSTRATED THIS BY REFERRING TO MY CONVERSATION WITH PANAMA DELEGATE, JULIO YAU, WHO HAD REPEATEDLY ASSURED ME THAT DESPITE PANAMA'S AGGRESSIVE PUBLIC SPEECHES AT WCIWY, WHICH WERE IN PART

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A RESPONSE TO SNYDER AMENDMENT, PANAMA STRONGLY DESIRED CONTINUE NEGOTIATIONS WITH US. ECHEVERRIA SAID HE COULD UNDERSTAND PANAMA'S NEED FOR PUBLIC STANCES INTENDED BOTH TO PRESSURE USG AND TO SATISFY ITS OWN DOMESTIC POLITICAL NEEDS, WHILE ATE THE SAME TIME CONTINUING PRIVATE NEGOTIATIONS WITH USG IN ATMOSPHERE OF UNDERSTANDING AND CORDIALITY. HE WAS IMPRESSED AT PROGRESS PARTIES HAVE MADE IN REACHING CONCEPTUAL AGREEMENTS ON IMPORTANT AND COMPLICATED SUBJECTS.

HE RECOGNIZED FROM OUR BRIEFING THIS WAS STILL A LONG AND COMPLICATED PROCESS, AND I ASKED HIM TO RECALL COMPLICATIONS IN WORK WITH MUCH SMALLER CHAMIZAL TRANSFER AND MORE RECENTLY SALINITY AGREEMENT.

4. THE PRESIDENT SAID, REPEATING (AS IS HIS WONT) SAME STATEMENT AT LEAST THREE TIMES DURING THE CONVERSATION, THAT HE WOULD STRESS TO TORRIJOS AND HIS COLLEAGUES THE NEED TO CONTINUE ON THE PATH OF CONSTRUCTIVE NEGOTIATIONS AND ABOVE ALL A WARNING "NOT TO BE DRAWN INTO MIRAGE OF SEEKING EXTRA-CONTINENTAL ASSISTANCE IN SOLVING THIS PROBLEM, AS THIS WOULD BE DANGEROUS NOT ONLY FOR THE LIBERTIES OF PANAMA, BUT FOR THE ENTIRE CONTINENT".

5. IN CLOSING, HE THANKED SENATOR MANSFIELD FOR HIS INSIGHTS INTO THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESSES INVOLVED, REQUESTED ME TO THANK THE DEPARTMENT FOR ITS VERY VALUABLE BRIEFING, WHICH WAS ILLUMINATING TO HIM AS HE DID NOT REALIZE HOW COMPLICATED WERE THE ISSUES INVOLVED NOR KNOW WHAT PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE. HE CLOSED WITH A PLEA THAT BOTH SENATOR MANSFIELD AND THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH COULD BE UNDERSTANDING RE PANAMA'S ASPIRATIONS WHICH MUST NECESSARILY HAVE THE EMOTIONAL AND MORAL SUPPORT OF ALL LATIN AMERICA REITERATING STILL ONCE AGAIN THE WARNING THAT HE INTENDED TO GIVE TORRIJOS RE EXTRA-CONTINENTAL INTRUSION IN MATTER.  
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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** Z  
**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** FOREIGN RELATIONS, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, NEGOTIATIONS, INTERNATIONAL CANALS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 03 JUL 1975  
**Decaption Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Decaption Note:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** GolinoFR  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1975MEXICO05898  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Film Number:** D750230-0059  
**From:** MEXICO  
**Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Image Path:**  
**ISecure:** 1  
**Legacy Key:** link1975/newtext/t19750788/aaaadaqd.tel  
**Line Count:** 141  
**Locator:** TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM  
**Office:** ACTION ARA  
**Original Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** STADIS  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 3  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** CONFIDENTIAL  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** STADIS  
**Reference:** 75 STATE 156112  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** GolinoFR  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 10 SEP 2003  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <10 SEP 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <11 SEP 2003 by GolinoFR>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
06 JUL 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** US-PANAMA TREATY NEGOTIATIONS: ECHEVERRIA BRIEFING FOR ROGERS FROM AMBASSADOR JOVA  
**TAGS:** PFOR, PN, PQ, MX, US, (ECHEVERRIA ALVAREZ, LUIS), (MANSFIELD, MIKE)  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006